

REMARKS

Claim 1 has been amended to state that the non-particulate solution used to treat the superabsorbent material includes a hydrophilic soft polymer having an alkoxysilane functionality. This amendment is supported on page 9, lines 13-20. The alkoxysilane functionality provides the hydrophilic polymer with latent crosslinking capability which permits the hydrophilic polymer to be applied in a flowable state (i.e., in a solution) and enables subsequent, post-application crosslinking via a condensation reaction. Dependent Claims 2, 29, 31-33 and 35 have been amended for consistency with Claim 1.

The rejection of Claims 1, 3-21 and 28 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as anticipated by, or under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as obvious over U.S. Patent 6,414,214 (“Engelhardt et al.”) is respectfully traversed. Engelhardt et al. discloses coating superabsorbent polymer particles with surfactants to prevent their agglomeration. Various monomeric and polymeric surfactants are disclosed at Col. 9, line 39 – Col. 10, line 59. However, the reference does not disclose or suggest a superabsorbent material treated with a solution including a hydrophilic soft polymer having an alkoxysilane functionality, as recited in Applicants’ Claim 1. Furthermore, the disclosed surfactants are functionally different because they apparently do not exhibit latent, post-application crosslinking. No claim is anticipated or rendered obvious. This rejection should be withdrawn.

The rejection of Claims 1, 3-21 and 28-35 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as anticipated by, or under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as obvious over U.S. Patent 6,391,451 (“Mitchell et al.”) is respectfully traversed. Mitchell et al. discloses surface treating a superabsorbent material with a hydroxyalkylamide to substantially increase the rate of liquid absorption (Col. 5, line 63 – Col. 6, line 14). The reference does not disclose or suggest a superabsorbent material treated with a solution including a hydrophilic soft polymer having an alkoxysilane functionality, as recited in Applicants’ Claim 1. Furthermore, the disclosed hydroxyalkylamide apparently does not provide increased resistance to damage as measured by the tests recited in Claim 1. No claim is anticipated or rendered obvious. This rejection should be withdrawn.

The rejection of Claims 1-21, 28-31 and 34 under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as anticipated by, or under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as obvious over U.S. Publication 2005/0027268 ("Qin et al.") is respectfully traversed. Qin et al. discloses a superabsorbent material which has been surface treated with a water-soluble non-crosslinked polymer. Various cationic and anionic polymers useful for surface treatment are listed on page 4, ¶¶ 38-39. However, the reference does not disclose or suggest a superabsorbent material treated with a solution including a hydrophilic soft polymer having an alkoxysilane functionality, as recited in Applicants' Claim 1. Furthermore, the disclosed surfactants are functionally different because they apparently do not exhibit latent, post-application crosslinking.

Furthermore, Qin et al. is not available as prior art under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) because Qin et al. and the instant application are commonly owned by and assigned to Kimberly-Clark Worldwide, Inc. No claim is anticipated or rendered obvious. This rejection should be withdrawn.

The rejection of Claims 1-21 and 28-35 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as anticipated by, or under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as obvious over U.S. Patent 6,323,252 to Gartner et al. is respectfully traversed. Gartner et al. discloses a superabsorbent polymer treated with an aqueous additive solution. Additives include salts of monovalent and certain multivalent ions, and contain water-soluble organic substances such as propoxylated polyols (Col. 3, lines 51-65). The reference does not disclose or suggest a superabsorbent material treated with a solution including a hydrophilic soft polymer having an alkoxysilane functionality, as recited in Applicants' Claim 1. No claim is anticipated or rendered obvious. This rejection should be withdrawn.

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Applicants believe that the claims, as presented, are in condition for allowance. If the Examiner detects any unresolved issues, then Applicants' attorney respectfully requests a telephone call from the Examiner, and a telephone interview.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Maxwell J. Petersen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Maxwell" and last name "Petersen" clearly distinguishable.

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